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## STUDENT'S CULTURE AT CAMPUSES. HOW TO IMPROVE ARCHIVAL TRADITION

### Abstract

**Purpose:** *After their studies students will be promoted to teachers, economic leaders, scientists, judges and political spokesmen. So, they will have an outstanding importance for future shifts in politics, economy and development of the community in general. Research about their study time as a time of education, experience and self-testing is not as intensive as it could be. At least this is a problem of a lack of archival sources.*

**Method/approach:** *This article examines the status quo of archival holdings at Hamburg University Archives about students. It extrapolates from this finding to a suggestion to make additional efforts to access additional archival material.*

**Results:** *University archives may review their accessional possibilities, their appraisal decisions, and their strategies on tradition building. Concerning archiving digital material archives may consider human scruples as well as human and/or companies' behaviour similarly to technical challenges.*

**Conclusions/findings:** *University archives must not wait to get material offered and they have to go into accessioning offensive. For example, they may talk to students' organisations, undertake projects of oral history and crowd sourcing projects, collect student related material on the campus and make photo campaigns on the campus.*

**Keywords:** *archival tradition, universities, students, accessing, service*

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## LA CULTURA DEGLI STUDENTI NEI CAMPUS. COME MIGLIORARE LA TRADIZIONE ARCHIVISTICA

### **Astratto**

**Scopo:** *Dopo gli studi gli studenti saranno promossi a insegnanti, leader economici, scienziati, giudici e portavoce politici. Avranno quindi un'importanza eccezionale per i futuri cambiamenti nella politica, nell'economia e nello sviluppo della comunità in generale. La ricerca sul tempo dedicato allo studio come momento di educazione, esperienza e auto-test non è così intensa come potrebbe essere. Almeno questo è un problema di mancanza di fonti archivistiche.*

**Metodo/approccio:** *questo articolo riassume lo status quo del patrimonio archivistico relativo agli studenti presso gli archivi dell'Università di Amburgo. Da questa scoperta si estrapola un suggerimento per compiere ulteriori sforzi per accedere ad ulteriore materiale d'archivio.*

**Risultati:** *gli archivi universitari possono rivedere le loro possibilità di adesione, le loro decisioni di valutazione e le loro strategie sulla costruzione della tradizione. Per quanto riguarda l'archiviazione di materiale digitale, gli archivi possono considerare gli scrupoli umani così come il comportamento umano e/o aziendale alla stregua delle sfide tecniche.*

**Conclusioni/risultati:** *gli archivi universitari non devono aspettare di ricevere materiale offerto ed entrare in un'offensiva di adesione. Ad esempio, possono parlare con organizzazioni studentesche, intraprendere progetti di storia orale e progetti di crowdsourcing, raccogliere materiale relativo agli studenti nel campus e realizzare campagne fotografiche nel campus.*

**Parole chiave:** *tradizione archivistica, università, studenti, accesso, servizio*

## ŠTUDENTSKA KULTURA V ŠTUDENTSKIH KAMPUSIH. KAKO IZBOLJŠATI ARHIVSKO TRADICIJO

### Izvleček

**Namen:** *Po končanem študiju bodo študenti nadaljevali na delovnih mestih učiteljev, v gospodarstvu, postali bodo znanstveniki, morda sodnike in politične predstavniki. Tako bodo imeli izjemen pomen za prihodnje premike v politiki, gospodarstvu in razvoju skupnosti nasploh. Raziskovanje njihovega študijskega časa kot časa izobraževanja, izkušenj in samo preverjanja ni tako intenzivno, kot bi lahko bilo. To pa posledično pomeni manko arhivskega gradiva.*

**Metoda/pristop:** *Ta članek preučuje status quo arhivskega fonda o študentih v Arhivu univerze v Hamburgu. Iz ugotovitev ekstrapolira predlog, kako si dodatno prizadevati za dostop do dodatnega arhivskega gradiva.*

**Rezultati:** *Univerzitetni arhivi lahko preverijo možnosti dostopa do svojih arhivov, prevetrio svoje odločitve o vrednotenju in strategije za izgradnjo arhivske tradicije. Kar zadeva arhiviranje digitalnega gradiva, lahko arhivi podobno kot tehnične izzive obravnavajo tudi človeške pomisleke oziroma obnašanje ljudi in/ali podjetij.*

**Sklepi/ugotovitve:** *Univerzitetni arhivi ne smejo čakati na ponujeno gradivo in morajo biti proaktivni. Lahko se na primer pogovarjajo s študentskimi organizacijami, se lotijo projektov zapisa ustnih izročil in t.i. »crowd sourcing« projektov, zbirajo gradivo, povezano s študenti, na kampusu in pripravljajo fotokampanje na kampusu.*

**Ključne besede:** *arhivska tradicija, univerze, študenti, dostopanje, storitve*

## 1. TASK

Because of their special and higher education students will be promoted to leading positions both in society and in state administration after their studies. The students' interpretation of political norms and their social behavior will influence the future development of our societies. Alumni of university will shape not only politics, but also health systems, school education, economy, justice, arts and many more subjects (Göllnitz & Zimmermann, 2023, 25–28). This is why historical research should have a closer look at their academical socialization and their networks. To future leaders their years at the university are a kind of a learning laboratory for self-organization, political discussion and social life for the first time away from the shelters of their families. University education is not only focused on knowledge transfer but rather at the question of how to create new insights. Universities offer free time and a space for reflection on the own behavior and the own thoughts – often under the condition of an unstable social status – the uncertainty of financial and / or professional future. Young adults form their personality during their study time. To understand future or historical shifts in politics and society it may be essential to have a closer look at their time at the universities.

Students form the biggest group of university members with a huge gap between them and the scientific and administrative staff. In the term 2022/2023 there have been 42.819 students and 15.331 employees at Hamburg University. If you consider that most of the staff are nurses, physicians in training and other medical and administrative staff at the university's hospital (9.885 employees at medicine) the gap between the groups is rising. There are less than 700 professors at Hamburg University serving nearly 43.000 students (Wikipedia, 2024).

This proportion is the other way round if you look at scientific research on universities. The biggest amount of publications is related to the smaller group of professors and their research. A fewer number of publications concerns teaching. And the smallest outcome of research is dedicated to learning and the learners (Hormuth, 2023, 9–10). Of course, professors do have an outstanding position and they are the ones who create new knowledge and who work on the purpose of mankind. But students still remain underrepresented in research on institutions of higher education compared to their number at university. Although students

of modern times have a “function as a seismograph” (Nipperdey, 1990, 581) concerning changes in community scientific publications concerning students, their studies, and their life at the campuses are still inadequately represented in research on universities.

## **2. ARCHIVAL MATERIAL CONCERNING STUDENTS. EXAMPLE: HAMBURG UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES**

Regarding to user-interviews at Hamburg University Archives often there are three complaints concerning archival material about students: there is a lack of sources, the existing sources came to us only by chance and/or it was very difficult to get any sources for the research at all. This finding does not come surprisingly to university archivists. At Hamburg University Archives there are approximate 2 km of archival holdings, but just about 50 meters are from student's organizations or from single students. This is 2.5 percent.

This has its reason in the legal situation, because in democratic systems archival laws only bind official bodies to the duty to offer their files to the archives (Hamburgisches Archivgesetz, 1991). The preservation of the administrative files enables public control of the authorities by making governmental and administrative acting transparent and checkable. In Germany, students' organizations are not a part of the university's official administration as they are in Poland, for example. They have a private character and are not obliged to offer their files to the archives.

The holdings of the university's bodies distort the view on the students additionally to outnumbering archival material from students' origin. At the example of dorms Werber, Lehmann and Plener showed that administration in general seems to make individuals become objects while they subjugate themselves under the governmental logic of regulation, administration, and power (Werber, 2021; Lehmann, 2021; Plener, 2021). So, students become objects of administrative acting. In archival tradition students are not seen as individuals who organize life at the campus und leave a mark on every-day business at the universities.

Reconsidering what types of documents about individual students between 1919 and 1935 Hamburg University Archives preserve in its holdings there are just a few remarks to make:

*Application form for enrolment:* Future students had to register at a university office to be accepted for studies. University administration staff checked personal documents and the right of access to university studies, in most cases a certificate of Abitur. The applicant had to fill a form for enrolment. The catalogue of questions to be answered in that form changed over the decades for many times – there are at least 15 different catalogues between 1919 and 1935 (Brockelt, 2023). The applicant had to give information about surname and first name, date of birth, place of birth, citizenship, address, faculty and area of studies, former enrolments at the same or at other universities and many more. According to the time additional information had to be given: war service, religion, Aryan descent.

*Entry in the enrolment book:* University administration noted surname, first name, number of enrolments, date of enrolment, faculty of studies and date of disenrollment.

*Registration book:* Every individual student had to keep a registration book. She or he had to note which classes she or he attended. She or he had to ensure that the payment of the fees for the classes and for university purposes had been confirmed by signature of docent and administration staff. These books had been in use until the beginning of the digital age in university administration. They are property of the students and come to university archives only by chance. So, there are about a handful of them for a number of hundreds of thousand students or maybe millions of students.

*Examination files:* Examination files show the process of examination, the examination paper, the report of the professors and the certificate.

None of these documents gives hints to anything about student's life on campus, their social networks and their process of learning. These historical sources are only to administer their studies. These files show students as objects and not as subjects. Of course, there are some other holdings at Hamburg University Archives, which originates from the students themselves and not from university administration. They show us something about life on campus like very few holdings from student's communities, as for example the records of "gay students association" from the 1980s. They show student's self-organization and quarrels between different bodies of general students' committee. They show the gay student's fight

for social acceptance and against AIDS, how they acted in the political and social space of university as a mirror for the whole society. This holding consists of 69 files in less than one meter (AStA Schwulenreferat).

There is the self-made newspaper of the student council for “romance studies”, which is a real gold mine for insights into students’ world. It contains reviews of classes, attitudes towards the so-called revolutions in Southern America, social issues, comments on the changes in curricula, protest against nuclear power plants and so on. But there are only 17 issues of this self-made newspaper from 1974 to 1977 (Fachschaft Romanistik, no. 1-17). This is a spotlight on the 1970s, but it does not allow general historical observations about students’ life in turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century.

So, the archival tradition about students does not correlate to their important contribution to life at universities and does not allow to consider them in an appropriate way in scientific research. What university archives could do to change this situation is to reconsider their:

- accessional possibilities
- their appraisal decisions and
- their strategies on tradition building.

### **3. MISSION STATEMENT**

University archives should improve the situation of archival tradition about student’s life at universities both in quality and in quantity. The aim should be a long-term development and a lasting improvement. Short-termed and third party founded projects could be part of this strategy, but they are not a goal themselves. The goal in general is to enable historical, social-science, political and other research on education, training, socializing, self-organization etc. of students as future leaders in culture, economy, and politics.

University archives could

- optimize contact and communication to student’s and alumni’s organizations,
- develop their skills in web- and in social media archiving,
- generate online databases for crowdsourcing,
- undertake photo-campaigns on the campuses,

- make interviews with (former) students as a part of an oral history strategy and
- ...

#### **4. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL WAITING TO BE ACCESSIONED**

University archives will have to optimize their contact to student's organizations both to the General Students' Committee and to the students' councils in the faculties and departments. Although they are not obliged to give their documents to the archives, university archives could offer them archiving as a service. As Hamburg University Archives has already learned, there will be long discussions about data protection. Huge effort must be done to convince the students that the university does not want to control them, but to support them. This support could be an agreement to archive their websites, email-accounts, and their social media channels. The development in archiving websites is still to be developed further. At least there is ISO-Standard 28500 (ISO 28500:2017) about the file format WARC (Web ARChive). Archives are able to make crawls, that are static and show the status quo of a certain timestamp of a certain website. Email-archiving is possible, but standards and workflows still must be developed.

Archiving social media is a little more difficult. Internet does forget! For example: there had been a wide-spread platform for students in Germany: "studiVz. Das Studiverzeichnis". Students not only found their future wives and husbands there but also organized learning-groups, started discussions about curricula, special classes and so on. It showed their networks at university and beyond. This could have been a real treasure for building up archival tradition on student's life at campuses and to analyze students' networks. Unfortunately, the platform could not manage the competition of Facebook and closed in 2022 after a long period of fading away. All data had been deleted (Wikipedia, 2023). And, yes, it was the competition of Facebook, and not twitter or Instagram or another younger platform. That shows how fugitive social web is.

X, formally known as Twitter, is developing in a dangerous way concerning archiving. X closed its Academic Research Access Application Programming Interface at the end of April 2023. The German National Library and the Science data Center for Literature started a crowd sourcing initiative in February 2023 and together with hundreds of academical users they managed to archive the Ger-



man Twitter from March 2006 to May 2011 (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, 2023). What does happen to the material from 2012 on? Nobody knows yet.

Changes in social behavior – the shift of a whole internet community from one application to another – and in private company's politics are a danger to archival mission at the same level as technical challenges. When it comes to questions of digital archiving one can often observe a rejective reaction. People are frightened to make mistakes with data protection concerning the EU-General Data Protection Regulation from 2016 (General Data Protection Regulation, 2016) while it is no problem to the same people to give material to the archives which is analogue and paper-based. The content is the same, but the form is different. One of the major problems with digital archiving is not a technical question. It is the work on explaining the legal facts. Archives must observe that in their strategies in the same way as technical issues.

Additional to offer service to students' groups and organizations university archives could develop oral history projects together with alumni and their existing networks. One could ask them to write reports about their studies and their time at the university or make structured interviews. University archives could work together with the professors for public history and contemporary history to create databases for crowd-sourcing projects. As the covid-19-pandemia started there had been created a number of such projects, in which citizens could upload photographs, text, songs and so on which they link to their own experience of pandemic situation. Right now, Hamburg University Archives are taking over the "coronarchive" (Bunnenberg, Logge, Roers & Steffen, n.d.) which is one of these platforms. The platforms exist technically and could be adapted very easily to projects on students' culture.

University archives could make photo-campaigns on the campus and take pictures of students' billboards and/or special student-related rooms.



**Picture 1: Cellar-room for students use (Dézi & Schlingmann, 2016)**

Picture 1 for example is from a campaign in 2016 and shows a cellar-room, which had not been used by university and so students occupied it for their use. This room is nowadays shut down to the public and used as a storage. Archaeologists from Hamburg University had the chance to serve the status quo shortly before the renovation works started (Dézi & Schlingmann, 2016). This picture 1 shows a prayer mat for religious worship and remnants of paint from preparing protest-posters.

The German Association for Archivists has got a special board on university and scientific archives (Verband deutscher Archivarinnen und Archivare e.V., n.d.). Right now this board is preparing the foundation of a special working group on collection of handbills, flyers, pamphlets and leaflets during its next spring-conference in Oldenburg in March 2024. One of the main working issues will be about terms of copyright, because in most cases the authors of this material are not known. This working group will have to develop a workflow to assure the observance of the legal framework.

Under the conditions of the lack of manpower a single archival institution cannot perform in all of these mentioned fields additionally to their mission generating

from the archival laws. So university archives have to make agreements about which archives would undertake which tasks and with which kind of resources. Tradition building on student's culture will be a joint venture of many archives from many locations and, at its best, in international cooperation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Students are an important social group at universities and the same persons will be in leading positions in our societies. Thus, research on their study time – in the sense of education, socialization and their first steps in their own political and social environment – will be important to understand future shifts in politics and society. But their outstanding position does not correspond with the status quo of research on studies and life at campus. One of the main reasons for this gap is the lack of archival material concerning students' life at the university and life on campus. Because students' organizations have a private character and are not obliged to offer their material to public archives, archives must develop other ways of accessing: offering archiving as a particular service with a special focus on digital sources, projects of oral history and crowd sourcing projects, photo campaigns, collecting handbills, flyers, pamphlets and leaflets. Making agreements about cooperation between different university archives will be necessary since performing in all these fields additionally to their legal mission will overstrain capabilities of most archives.

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## SUMMARY

*The article deals with the question of the imbalance between the importance of students on university campuses and the lack of archival records relating to student culture.*

*Although students will play an important role in historical developments as future leaders in politics, business and society, their studies as the place and time of their education and personal development are underrepresented in historical and sociological research. This is not least due to the poor availability of archival sources. University archives have the legal mandate to depict the administrative activities of their organization. Of course, Students are members of their universities, but regarding to their self-administration and self-organization they are not part of the administrative structure, which is the primary focus of archival records.*



*This article uses the example of Hamburg University Archives to present which sources from the university administration provide information about student biographies, prosopography's and student co-operation and coexistence on campus. In the second part, suggestions are made as to how the situation regarding student culture can be improved.*

*University archives should strengthen their contacts with student self-governing bodies and offer archiving as a special service. It should be noted that there may be a mistrust towards the archive as an official administrative unit and the fear on the student side of being disempowered or controlled by official bodies. A special focus could be placed on archiving their social web presences, as this is a communication medium widely used by students. The fluidity of these media and the proprietary situation should be urgently considered, as corporate policies regarding the openness of media content can change.*

*University archives could work together with the professors for public history and contemporary history to create databases for crowd-sourcing projects. The aim could be to provide a platform for uploading images, documents and so on, which students could fill with content from their student life. These platforms technically exist, for example, from projects to document the corona pandemic and they could easily be converted for these purposes. Another possibility would be to create oral-history projects together with alumni associations.*

*Another field would be the collection and archiving of student flyers and journals. Many university archives already do this, but the effort involved in cataloguing and copyright issues often stand in the way of actually working with the materials. These collections could be supplemented by photo campaigns on campus to document, for example, student association notice boards, rooms used by students and graffiti.*

*These are just some of many possible suggestions. The aim is to provide an incentive for university archives to take a closer look at the topic of creating an archival tradition of student culture and to develop consciously a strategy. As these tasks are too big to be tackled by a single archive additionally to their legal mission, the article proposes the creation of an archive network in which many different university archives should participate.*